

# NMRWA

## Source Water Protection Program

The New Mexico Rural Water Association is pleased to introduce its Source Water Protection Program. This program is designed to promote the protection of New Mexico's vital water resources by assisting rural communities in planning for the protection of their drinking water sources. Over 80% of our drinking water supplies come from aquifers deep below the ground where water has been stored for years. If pollution sources such as leaking underground gasoline tanks or septic systems seep into the aquifer or are drawn in from nearby drinking water wells, it is possible that your drinking water source could become contaminated. A contaminated well means a contaminated drinking water supply which is detrimental to the health of our communities and very costly to treat and/or clean up. This is the reason that NMRWA, the New Mexico Environment Department, and the US EPA are actively promoting source water protection as a means to assure the safety and quality of our drinking water sources. It is important that your community and your water system understand that this low-cost voluntary program will help you improve your water sources, elevate the health in your community, and reduce costs of intense water treatment or the development of new water resources.

## How The Program Works

### Step 1: Form a Community Planning Team

This team represents the diverse interests of the community and will gather information about the community water system sources and begin to plan short and long range goals for the water system.

### Step 2: Define the Area to Be Protected

Different types of drinking water sources require different protection measures. NMRWA staff is available to assist the planning team in delineating a protection area based on the source and then plot it onto a community map.

### Step 3: Identify/ Inventory Potential Contaminants

NMRWA staff and the planning team will physically survey the protection area to identify and inventory all potential contamination sources such as abandoned wells, leaking underground storage tanks, chemical or hazardous waste storage, and septic systems to name a few. This information will be plotted on the community map.

### Step 4: Manage the Source Water Protection Area

The planning team will prepare a report recommending methods to manage the protection area and minimize the effect of any potential contamination sources. These methods include community ordinances, special use permitting inside the protection area, community clean-up campaigns, and public information and education programs.

### Step 5: Plan for the Future

Source water protection will aid a community in maintaining water quality and availability for future generations. The planning team will look at the long-term effectiveness of the Protection Plan and develop a contingency plan to insure alternate water supply sources if contamination occurs. Moreover, emergency response and drought mitigation are also typically part of contingency planning.

Source water protection is an integral part of any community's planning process. The protection and conservation of water resources must remain a top priority in planning for the future growth of a community. The Source Water Protection Program coordinated by Andrew Sweetman is an easy way to protect your community water system from contamination and plan for safe drinking water in the future. If you have questions or are interested in starting the planning process contact:

## Andrew Sweetman

NMRWA

Source Water Protection Program Specialist

505-228-4316 (mobile)



## Who We Are!

*The New Mexico Rural Water Association (NMRWA) is a nonprofit membership organization of rural water and wastewater systems, companies, and interested individuals. We are dedicated to helping provide safe drinking water throughout rural New Mexico. We encourage the protection of the health and environment of all New Mexicans by increasing the technical knowledge and expertise of water industry professionals in rural communities. NMRWA aims to provide the highest quality training and technical assistance to rural water and wastewater utilities throughout New Mexico, and representing the legislative and regulatory interests of our members.*



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